

# Hispanics and Tobacco

Approximately 31.3 million (11.2%) Americans are of Latin American or other Spanish descent. By 2005, Hispanics are expected to surpass African Americans as the nation's second largest racial/ethnic group, behind non-Hispanic whites.<sup>1</sup> Most Hispanic Americans are of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or South/Central American ancestry. Although cultural differences exist among subgroups, most Hispanics speak Spanish and are Roman Catholic. Hispanic Americans have settled across the United States; however, 84% reside in Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, and Texas.<sup>2</sup> Population survey data results vary, depending on the location and the language used in the surveys.

## Health Effects

- Smoking is responsible for 87% of the lung cancer deaths in the United States. Overall, lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths among Hispanics.<sup>3</sup>
- Lung cancer deaths are about three times higher for Hispanic men (23.1 per 100,000) than for Hispanic women (7.7 per 100,000). The rate of lung cancer deaths per 100,000 were higher among Cuban American men (33.7) than among Puerto Rican (28.3) and Mexican American (21.9) men.<sup>3</sup>
- Coronary heart disease is the leading cause of death for Hispanics living in the United States. Among Hispanic subgroups in 1992–1994, death rates for coronary heart disease were 82 per 100,000 for Mexican American men and 44.2 per 100,000 for Mexican American women, 118.6 per 100,000 for Puerto Rican men and 67.3 per 100,000 for Puerto Rican women, and 95.2 per 100,000 for Cuban men and 42.4 per 100,000 for Cuban women.<sup>3</sup>

## Cigarette Smoking Prevalence

- The 1997 National Health Interview Survey data show that overall current smoking prevalence among Hispanic adults was 20.4%, compared with 16.9% for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, 25.3% for whites, 26.7% for African Americans, and 34.1% for American Indians and Alaska Natives.<sup>4</sup>
- In 1997, 26.2% of Hispanic men smoked compared with 27.4% of white men. The smoking rate among Hispanic women was 14.3 %, compared with 23.3% among white women.<sup>4</sup>
- The Monitoring the Future Study shows that cigarette smoking among Hispanic high school seniors declined from 35.7% in 1977 to 20.6% in 1989; however, smoking prevalence has been increasing in the 1990s — from 21.7% in 1990 to 27.3% in 1999.<sup>5</sup>
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) found that about one-third of Hispanic high school students in grades 9 through 12 were current cigarette smokers. Smoking prevalence increased by one-third among Hispanic students from 1991 (25.3%) to 1997 (34.0%). Recent YRBSS data shows that current smoking trends among Hispanic students remain high, but appeared to have plateaued with no statistically significant difference between 1997 and 1999 — 34.0% and 32.7%, respectively.<sup>6</sup>
- The 1999 National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS) estimates that current cigarette smoking prevalence use by racial/ethnic groups was higher among white high school students (32.8%) than among Hispanic (25.8%) and African American (15.8%) students. However, the rate of smoking among middle school students by racial/ethnic groups was relatively similar; about 1 in 10 Hispanic (11.0%), African American (9.0%), and white (8.8%) middle school students reported smoking cigarettes in the past 30 days.<sup>7</sup>

## Prevalence of other forms of tobacco use

- Aggregated National Health Interview Survey data from 1987 and 1991 show that more Cuban American

men (2.5%) smoked cigars than Mexican American (1.5%) and Puerto Rican (1.3%) men.<sup>3</sup>

- The 1999 YRBS study found that 21.9% of Hispanic male high school students reported smoking a cigar on one or more days during the past month compared with about 28.3% of white male and 16.0% of African American male students.<sup>6</sup>
- The 1999 NYTS shows that among high school students, 13.4% of Hispanics, 14.8% of African Americans, and 16.0% of whites smoked cigars, and that among middle school students, 7.6% of Hispanics, 8.8% of African Americans, and 4.9% of whites smoked cigars in the past 30 days.<sup>7</sup>
- The 1999 NYTS found that smokeless tobacco use among middle and high school for white male students was 3.0% and 8.7%, respectively, for Hispanic male students 2.2% and 3.6%, respectively, and for African American students 1.9% and 2.4%, respectively.<sup>7</sup>

## Tobacco Industry Influence

- Tobacco products are advertised and promoted disproportionately to racial/ethnic minority communities. Examples of target promotions include the introduction of a cigarette product with the brand name "Rio" and an earlier cigarette product named "Dorado," which was advertised and marketed to the Hispanic American community.<sup>3</sup>
- To increase its credibility in the Hispanic community, the tobacco industry has contributed to programs that aim to enhance the primary and secondary education of children, has funded universities and colleges, and has supported scholarship programs targeting Hispanics. Tobacco companies have also placed advertising in many Hispanic publications. The industry also contribute to cultural Hispanic events and provide significant support to the Hispanic art community.<sup>3,8</sup>

## References

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